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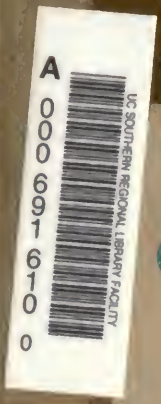

ESTIMATING TACTICAL SITUATIONS

and

COMPOSING FIELD ORDERS

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas,
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PART I

Estimating Tactical Situations

In our service we have come to use the term "Estimate of the Situation" to express that logical process of thought which, applied to a concrete tactical problem, enables one to arrive at a definite tactical dicision. An estimate of the situation is valueless unless it reaches its logical termination in a decision upon a suitable plan of action. Similarly the decision is of little value unless conveyed, in the form of appropriate orders, to the subordinates charged with its execution.

On this subject our proposed Field Service Regulations state:

"To frame a suitable field order, the commander must make an *estimate of the situation*, culminating in a decision upon a definite plan of action. He must then actually *draft* or *word* the *orders* which will carry his decision into effect.

"An *estimate of the situation* involves a careful consideration, from the commander's viewpoint, of all the circumstances affecting the particular problem. In making this estimate, he considers his *mission* as set forth in the orders or instructions under which he is acting, or as deduced by him from his knowledge of the situation, all available information of the

enemy (strength, position, movements, probable intentions, etc.), conditions affecting his *own command* (strength, position, supporting troops, etc.), and the *terrain* in so far as it affects the particular situation; he then compares the various plans of action open to him and *decides* upon that plan which will best enable him to accomplish his mission."

MISSION

In estimating a tactical situation the first thing for a commander to do is to consider well his *mission.*

When a command is acting merely as an integral part of a larger command, its mission is ordinarily determined for it by higher authority. In the case, however, of a practically independent command, or in any case where a force is acting under instructions of a discretionary nature, the commander will ordinarily have to deduce his mission from his knowledge of the general situation, his acquaintance with the intentions or desires of the superior who sent him forth, and his appreciation of the existing military situation.

Although each situation influences the mission and conduct of an independent leader in quite a different manner than it would if his command were directly dependent upon another and he himself merely obeying precise and definite orders susceptible of but one interpretation, yet in the one case, no less than in the other, the general purpose of the supreme commander must always be borne in mind. The means, however, by which the general purpose may best be furthered will differ greatly. As General von Verdy says: "The officer who suddenly encounters the enemy while patroling with his platoon must conduct his actions from a different point of view than if he commanded his platoon as skirmishers in front of his company. A division in an army corps

will generally be so situated that it must carry out an action, even though it be completely annihilated in so doing, and then it would still be promoting the general purpose; on the other hand, a division widely separated from an army would, as a rule, utterly fail to accomplish its mission if it allowed itself to be annihilated."[1]

Considering the case of an independent commander in the field, it is evident that he should always bear in mind the mission upon which he was sent forth. In order, however, to accomplish this, his original mission, he will frequently have to adopt temporarily another mission.

For example, Colonel A's regiment of infantry is sent from the west with orders to destroy the Missouri river bridges at Leavenworth and Fort Leavenworth in order to prevent an Eastern brigade from crossing the river and advancing westward. Upon approaching Frenchman, Colonel A learns that four or five companies of hostile infantry have crossed to the west side of the river and have taken up a position on the line Atchison hill—Government hill, with detachments at each of the Missouri river bridges; but that the rest of their brigade cannot arrive for some hours. It is apparent that Colonel A can now have no hope of accomplishing his original mission unless he first defeats and disperses the hostile troops in his immediate front. His general mission remains unchanged, but in view of the recent developments his immediate mission is to make a successful attack upon the force that blocks his advance, and thus clear the way for the accomplishment of his general mission.

In some cases circumstances arise which will make impossible the accomplishment of the original

1 "Studies in the Leading of Troops"—Von Verdy du Vernois.

mission, but will still afford the commander an opportunity to further his superior's general plans.

For example, let us assume that Colonel A was sent out upon the same mission as before, but that, by the time he reaches Frenchman, he learns that practically the entire hostile brigade has already crossed to the west side of the river and is advancing westward. General A's original mission was in this case the same as before, i.e., to destroy the bridges and thus prevent the enemy from crossing the river and advancing westward. Colonel A, however, has arrived too late to prevent the enemy from crossing the Missouri and is too weak to *prevent* the enemy from advancing westward if he so chooses. Colonel A can, however, *delay* the enemy's advance in that direction. As this apparently is the only way in which he can further the general intentions of his chief, Colonel A's present mission is to delay the enemy's westward advance by such means as are in his power, e.g., by destroying the bridges over Salt creek and elsewhere, by fighing rear guard actions, etc.

It sometimes happens that, by reason of unexpected developments, the original mission must be totally disregarded and a very different one adopted. For example, let us assume the following:

A Blue divsion in camp south of Leavenworth has sent out a regiment of infantry with orders to proceed northward to Kickapoo and destroy certain Red supplies reported to be stored there. The regiment moves out as ordered, but upon reaching the vicinity of 17, its colonel receives reliable information that a brigade of hostile infantry is advancing eastward on the Atchison Pike and is at this time near K; also that Kickapoo is occupied by a strong force of the enemy. Under the circumstances it is apparent that an attempt to carry out the original mission of

the command would be suicidal. Only by prompt retreat can the regiment be saved. The commander's present mission is therefore to withdraw toward his division as promptly as possible and avoid being cut off by the enemy.

As *a commander's true mission should be the guiding star of all his ordered movements*, it is plain that he, especially if acting independently, cannot be too careful in interpreting his orders aright and in acting in such a way as will best further the interests of his superior commanders.

Having determined upon what constitutes his true mission, the commander should then consider the various factors that influence his chances of accomplishing it. These may be considered in whatever sequence seems best suited to the particular situation. In some cases there may be no necessity for considering all the factors enumerated in our (F.S.R.) definition of an estimate of the situation; in other cases time may be lacking for full and complete consideration.

In this discussion, however, the various factors that ordinarily may be expected to influence tactical situations will for convenience be taken up in detail and in the sequence in which they appear in the definition referred to above.

THE ENEMY

Information in General.—Ordinarily the information of the enemy will be more or less incomplete. Only on extremely rare occasions will a commander have full and accurate knowledge of the enemy's strength, position, morale, intentions, etc. Occasionally a commander may have sufficient information to enable him to deduce quite accurately the enemy's military situation, but in most cases information will be entirely lacking upon some important points.

Inasmuch as information of the enemy is ordinarily obtained from various sources, it follows that a commander must carefully weigh each bit of information and determine the degree of credibility to be attached to it. Frequently this can be done by comparing doubtful information with reports from sources known to be reliable. A report which at first glance appears unreliable or incredible may be in part so strongly corroborated by information from other sources that in the end the entire report may be accepted as worthy of credence.

The sources from which the information comes and the character and political tendencies of the persons from whom it is obtained should always be considered. Ordinarily information from higher commanders can be accepted as reliable, but such is not always the case. Practically the only absolutely reliable information is that obtained from the personal observation of trained officers.

As stated in Buddecke's work on "Tactical Decisions and Orders," "every report, even when received from an undoubtedly reliable source, should primarily be carefully scrutinized as to its *correctness*, since errors, inaccuracies, and misconceptions are often brought out by comparison, and must be cleared up; only when that has been done can we begin to build a whole out of the different details."

In considering the information received concerning the enemy, it is usually well to consider also what information the enemy may have received concerning our forces. The attitude of the inhabitants, whether friendly, neutral or hostile, would ordinarily have considerable bearing upon both the amount and reliability of the information received by commanders in the field.

Strength and Position.—In considering the probable strength of the enemy, it should be remembered

that his forces are likely to be over-estimated by even the best intentioned observers, and that reports concerning his strength, especially if received from non-military persons, should be accepted as conclusive only after corroboration from other sources.

With reference to the enemy's present position, it may be quite definitely known, or it may be deduced from reliable reports, or it may be largely a matter of conjecture. The importance of accurate information upon this subject varies with the distance separating the opposing forces and with their respective missions, but in any case it should be given due consideration.

It is important that the positions of your own troops and those of the enemy be determined, not only with reference to each other, but also *with reference to the more important features of the terrain.*

For example, let us assume that you are in command of a strong Blue force advancing to force the crossings of a river held by insignificant Red detachments. Assume also that you receive information that strong reinforcements are on the way to support the Red detachments. In such a case it is obvious that you must consider not only the actual reported position of the Red reinforcements, but also the distance from their reported positions to the river, the time by which they may reasonably be expected to reach it, etc. The distance from your own position to the river and the time you can reasonably expect to reach it should also be considered. In case the information of the Red reinforcements is several hours (or days) old, *the distance that such reinforcements could have marched in the interim* must be considered. For, in the absence of recent and definite information of the enemy, you must always credit him with doing what would best further his own interests and be most disadvantageous for you.

Probable Intentions.—Having carefully balanced the various reports received regarding the enemy's strength and position, and having arrived at some sort of conclusion concerning them, the commander should next consider the enemy's probable intentions. Said the Duke of Wellington: "The great thing is to know from this side of the hill what the enemy is doing on the other." The so-called fog of war obscures the view of the commander, but, so far as possible, the latter should carefully consider what line of action his adversary is most likely to take. As stated in Field Service Regulations: "When reliable information of the enemy cannot be obtained, it is assumed that he will act with good judgment."

A commander who is fairly well acquainted with the enemy's strength and position but unaware of his intentions, should try to imagine himself in the place of his adversary and then figure out, from the latter's assumed point of view, what method of action would seem most reasonable and natural.

In war the enemy will undoubtedly make every effort to keep us from learning his strength, position, intentions or the manner in which he proposes to carry out his intentions. The result is that a commander will rarely be able to say to himself that his adversary will do exactly this or that in exactly this way or that way; all that he can ordinarily do is to analyze the information received concerning his forces and then try to make reasonable deductions as to his real intentions and probable movements.

When, however, the enemy is so far distant that contact with him cannot be gained during the day, it is better to postpone your attempt to deduce his intentions until such time as it becomes necessary for you to make a new estimate of the situation. In the meantime you may receive other information that will enable you to make a more correct estimate of

the enemy's intentions. It is easier to form a correct estimate by considering, from an unbiased point of view, *all* the information received up to the last moment than it is to change an opinion previously formed on insufficient information. Therefore *avoid arriving at premature conclusions.*

The influence upon one's own plans exerted by the conclusions formed concerning the enemy's probable intentions varies greatly according to the situation. *A commander should endeavor always to keep the initiative,* and this can only be done by acting aggressively. In war it is better to lead than to follow suit. A commander whose mission makes offensive action desirable and whose force is greatly superior to the enemy's clearly should not permit the enemy's movements to change his general plan of action. On the other hand, the dispositions of a commander, whose mission is strictly defensive, and whose force is greatly inferior to the enemy's, may be considerably affected by the movements of the enemy. So long as possible, however, *a commander should keep the reins in his own hands.* His mission, and not the enemy's movement, should, as long as possible, be considered the governing factor.

OUR OWN TROOPS

A commander who has a clear realization of his proper mission, and who has made a careful analysis of the information received concerning the enemy and considered its bearing upon his mission, would ordinarily next consider the conditions immediately affecting his own troops.

Strength and Position.—The strength of one's own force as compared with the actual or reported strength of the enemy should ordinarily be considered, but an apparent superiority on the part of the

enemy should not be given undue weight, especially if our mission demands aggressive action.

The position of our troops may in some cases be one of the controlling factors in the situation while in others it may be of minor importance. A comparison of our own position with the reported position of the enemy is in most cases not only advisable but necessary.

Supporting Troops.—It has already been shown that, if a commander is acting beyond supporting distance from any friendly troops, his action may have to be very different from what it would be if support were near at hand. A commander should ordinarily consider the amount of real support that can be expected from any supporting troops. This naturally involves a consideration of the distance by which he is separated from them or of the time that must elapse before they can be of any material assistance to him. In case the commander knows that the enemy also has supporting troops, it is advisable to compare the two supporting forces as regards their relative strength and positions and their respective distances from the probable point of contact or scene of combat.

TERRAIN

The terrain and its influence upon the situation must be given the consideration due its importance, for the nature of the ground—whether favorable or unfavorable—may mean the difference between success and failure.

In considering the terrain, it is absolutely necessary to consider those features that may affect the particular tactical situation. For example, in a situation which necessitates the issuance of march orders, the advantages and disadvantages of the various routes available for the march ordinarily deserve the

first consideration. In a situation which necessitates the issuance of orders directing the occupation of a defensive position, the consideration of the size of the position, field of fire, strength of the flanks, cover for troops in the rear, direction of line of retreat, probable direction of the enemy's main attack, etc.; are usually of supreme importance. In a situation necessitating an attack upon a defensive position, the commander of the attacking force would naturally consider the position occupied by the enemy, natural cover for the attacking troops in their advance, whether the main attack had best be made against the defender's right or left flank, or whether it must necessarily be made against his front, and whether there are any obstacles preventing free movement to the front, flanks, or rear.

For example, in the case of the first tactical situation outlined under the heading "Mission" (see page 3), Colonel A would naturally, in considering the terrain, consider primarily the probable extent of the enemy's position, the command of Government and Atchison hills over the valley of Salt creek, the protection afforded by Sentinel hill to the early part of an advance against the hostile right, the cover afforded by the wood near Duffins, the cover to be found along the tributaries of Salt creek, the loss of time that would naturally result from a detour through the thick woods of Eleven Hundred Foot hill, the dead spaces that might be found near the western base of the hills occupied by the enemy, and, in short, all such features as influence his decision upon the line of advance, the point of attack, etc. He must not loose sight of the fact that the accomplishing of his general mission largely depends upon the *prompt* defeat of the enemy in his front and that the elements of time and distance must be given due weight in determining his plan of attack.

In the second situation (under the heading "Mission") Colonel A should consider primarily the advantage offered by Salt creek as an obstacle to the forward march of the enemy, the bridges over it that should be destroyed, the probable line of hostile advance, and the positions available for rear guard actions.

In the third situation the colonel would naturally first consider whether his best line of retreat would be southward via Frenchman and G, or via the Millwood road and Fort Leavenworth. The advantages of the latter route, especially if the bridge at Frenchman can be destroyed, are apparent, and the sheltering line of hills along Sheridan's drive will conceal his movements after he has left the valley of Salt creek.

TIME AND SPACE

In most estimates the allied elements of time and space must be considered. These elements are ordinarily of prime importance when it is a question of when reinforcements may be expected to arrive for one side or the other, when there is a time limit within which a certain operation must be concluded, when it is a question of concentrating scattered troops, or when road spaces and rates of marching have to be considered, etc. In some cases the single element of time may be the controlling factor and affect the commander's decision to a greater extent than all other factors combined.

METHODS

A commander who is certain that his original mission remains unchanged (or who recognizes the fact that, on account of new developments, he must modify his original conception of his mission or adopt a new one) and who has fully considered the various

factors that affect the situation, should then compare the various methods or plans of action open to him for selection. In comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the various possible methods he should always keep his mission in mind.

DECISION

Having carefully weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods open to him, the commander should *definitely decide upon the one plan of action which promises the best opportunity of enabling him to accomplish his true mission.* A commander's decision upon a single definite plan of action is therefore the culmination of his estimate. It is the cap-stone of the structure which he has built upon and around his mission.

Buddecke, after stating that the marks of sound tactical procedure are "simplicity and a firm adherence" to the line of action adopted, says: "The decision, once reached, must be unwaveringly carried out with our whole energy. This condition is of so great importance in tactical affairs that the best course of action, if carried out half-heartedly, will come to naught, while a mistake in the choice of courses can often be entirely offset by decided and competent action."

As Griepenkerl says: "*Arrive at a definite decision.* * * * I warn you against half measures. For example, if you have decided to attack, do so with all your troops; if you wish to retreat, do not come to a halt again after a few miles without the weightiest reasons. *Be perfectly clear in your own mind what you want to do* and then carry it out to the letter."

PART II

Map Problems

GENERAL REMARKS

Map problems are primarily intended to assist officers in gaining practical knowledge of tactics and to develop their power of decision.

Gizycki has well said that he who seeks to become a leader of troops should develop the following qualifications:

"1. The ability to reach a clear and intelligent decision.

"2. The ability to communicate this decision clearly and unmistakably to others.

"3. The necessary knowledge to enable him to lead the troops so as to carry out his intentions."*

All writers on tactics agree that these most desirable qualifications can best be developed by constant practice in the solving of concrete problems, necessitating the formulation by the student of a large number of definite decisions and orders. By a thorough course in such problems the student will acquire an ever increasing ability to form correct tactical decisions in the field and will eventually be able to arrive at such decisions very rapidly—in fact, almost simultaneously.

In the solution of map problems, it is not sufficient to arrive at general conclusions alone. To do that and no more would be of comparatively little value. The student must in each case try to imagine himself in the leader's place, form for himself

*Introduction to Strategic Tactical Exercises, Gizycki.

a mental picture of the terrain and of the dispositions of the troops, reckon correctly with reference to time and space, arrive at a clear and clean-cut decision, and embody his decision in the form of appropriate field orders. Only by so doing can he obtain the maximum benefit and the rapid development both of his "tactical sense" and of his powers of decision.

As Litzmann says: "A practical solution can nearly always be found by one who has sufficient talent and experience to see the map plastically before him and not only to comprehend mechanically the information in the problem concerning the strength of both forces, but to actually see the opposing parties with his mind's eye, and, as it were, actually experience the events portrayed."*

The necessary basis for the solution of map problems, consists, therefore, in an ability to read a map correctly and in a certain power of imagination.

The ability to read a map does not mean merely that the student "must be able to understand the meaning of all conventional signs and to reckon distances, but also that he must be able to comprehend all details so that they form themselves into a complete and harmonious whole, and this to such a degree that he actually feels the nature of the terrain in the map before him. Every soldier who is at all fitted for the duties of leadership can, by practice, gain this ability, though the time required may be long or short, according to the natural ability of the worker."*

SOLUTION OF MAP PROBLEMS

In solving a map problem the first thing to do is to read the problem carefully, comparing it meantime with the map. At this preliminary reading it is a

*Selected Division Problems, page 284.

good plan to mark on the map, either by means of colored pins† or pencils, all those places referred to in connection with our own troops and those of the enemy.

Having thus obtained a bird's-eye view of the situation, the problem should be carefully re-read several times. The longer and more difficult the problem, the greater the care that should be taken.

"In tactical problems the forces on both sides are, as a usual thing, no more clearly indicated than they would be in maneuvers or actual warfare. Of course one has definite information concerning the troops under his own command, but this is not always the case concerning friendly subdivisions; and the enemy's forces are almost always unknown. In this very point lies 'the uncertainty of war conditions', a very necessary part of a good tactical problem. Sometimes only 'symptoms' are given from which conclusions are to be drawn, just as in the case of doctor's diagnosis: for instance—the sound of firing from a distance where there is not supposed to be any enemy: —the sound of battle, suddenly ceasing, although we believed that we still had at least an hour before our time for taking part—the conduct of the inhabitants from which the nearness of hostile forces can often be guessed, etc. In reading a problem things of this sort are often easily overlooked, even though they be of supreme importance. Therefore, *it is important to read most carefully.*

"Often troops are seen at different times and at different places, or are reported by observers in different ways (so that) sometimes one may be in doubt whether the same troops or different ones are meant. However, careful attention to conditions of distance

†The round-headed pins used in the war game are very convenient for this purpose, blue pins being used for our own forces and red ones for hostile troops.

and time, as well as reference to the map and the use of dividers, will make matters clear." (Littzmann.)

The next thing to do is to consider the actual and relative positions of your own troops and those of the enemy and to picture to yourself the actual appearance of the ground, especially such features as may affect the problem in hand. Get oriented, as it were, upon the situation as a whole. As Griepenkerl says, "You must now see the troops in formation on the terrain before you—your own troops as well as the enemy's. *The more vivid your imagination in this, the better will be your tactical work*".

Having thus, by the aid of the map and your imagination, placed yourself in the place of the commander, you should definitely determine what is your *true mission.*

You must then consider both your own and the enemy's troops as well as the terrain *with especial reference to the manner in which these elements affect the accomplishing of your mission.* In this consideration your scale and dividers should be freely used. If it be a question of marching—either of your own troops or those of the enemy—you should measure the distance to important objectives and from that *calculate the time required to reach such points.* If it be a question of positions *their frontage and depth should be measured.*

WRITING AN ESTIMATE

If a written "Estimate of the Situation" is required as part of the solution of a map problem or terrain exercise, the student has an opportunity to show that he has arrived at his measures by logical sequence of thought. As Littzman says: "Only in this way does the best solution attain its full value, while a poorer solution can, if reasonably deduced, at least claim a lenient judgment. Finally, it is not at

all impossible that the one who constructed the problem will be converted to a different opinion by a well-grounded solution. After all, in tactical affairs, nothing can be laid down as absolutely correct and no author of problems can consider himself infallible."

The following suggestions may, with advantage, be observed in writing out an estimate of the situation:

Your *mission* should always be clearly stated at the beginning of the estimate.

The *enemy, your own troops and the terrain* should then be discussed in whatever manner and sequence appears most logical.

By discussing them in sequence, you may perhaps find it easier to avoid failing to give due consideration to each element. Generally, however, it will be found difficult to discuss each of them entirely by itself without rendering your discussion less logical. This is especially true of the terrain, for some of its features may affect only the enemy's movements while others may be of importance only to your own troops. Remember that *the main thing is to discuss in a logical way all the factors that affect the particular situation.*

Do not waste time in discussing features of the terrain that can in no way affect the solution of the problem, and do not forget that in most cases the elements of *time* and *space* deserve full consideration.

Having considered the various elements mentioned above, the next thixg to do is to *discuss such plans of action as are open for selection* and to compare their respective advantages and disadvantages. Make sure that you have not neglected to consider the various available methods or accomplishing your mission. Frequently solutions are faulty through

failure to consider a plan of action obviously preferable to the one adopted.

Your decision should de expressed in clear and unmistakable terms as the conclusion of your estimate. In some cases your decision may actually be formed piecemeal during the course of the estimate. For example, your mission may be such as to make it necessary for you to defeat or check the enemy. Your consideration of the enemy's superior strength causes you to *decide to act on the defensive.* Other considerations cause you to *decide to take up a defensive position without delay.* Your consideration of the terrain causes you to *decide to take up your position at a certain place.* The small size of your command causes you to *oceupy a certain limited amount of frontage,* while certain other considerations may cause you to *decide to post your reserve behind your right flank.* Even if your decision has been logically formed in some such manner and each step has been indicated, nevertheless you should definitely *conclude your estimate by stating your decision in its entirety.*

PART III.

Field Orders

"It is not only the commander's will which is decisive in war, but also his manner of expressing that will. *The order which is to transform decision into action is of the utmost importance.* The art of commanding is exceptionally difficult, but is indispensable for a leader of troops. A plan, promising success, may fail if it does not find correct expression in an order. Often a faulty expression, a word too much or too little, or an omission, may become the source of serious consequences.

"In general, however, it must be said that the ability to give orders goes hand in hand with tactical knowledge. Whoever has arrived at a definite and sure decision will be able to give clear and decisive orders."*

FORMAL ORDERS

Our proposed Field Service Regulations contain a number of rules upon the composition of field orders, as well as regulations upon the form of such orders. Certain "general forms" of field orders are given in the appendix to the Regulations, but in composing orders it must be remembered that *these forms are only guides* to point out the way *and are not set forms* to be blindly followed.

Formal orders may either be issued in writing or may be dictated by a commander or staff officer to the subordinate commanders or their representatives.

*Buddecke. "Tactical Decisions and Orders," page 47.

The written form is "generally used when commands are scattered or are as large as a division," although dictated orders are frequently made use of at division headquarters. Commanders of units smaller than a division ordinarily issue verbal or dictated orders, except when the command is more or less dispersed or when the conditions make the written order better adapted to the situation.

A dictated order does not differ in appearance from a formal written order, except that the distribution of troops (if used) is given between paragraphs 2 and 3. By thus placing the distribution of troops in the body of the order (instead of leaving it in the margin) the one to whom it is dictated can easily write down the order in an ordinary note book. This arrangement also enables the recipient to understand better the tactical dispositions prescribed in paragraph 3. When a written field order is sent by wire or signals the distribution of trooos is given in the same place as it would be in a dictated order—i.e., after paragraph 2.

VERBAL ORDERS

A verbal field order can of course have no formal "heading" or "ending," nor does it ordinarily contain a formal statement of the "distribution of troops." The body of the order, should, however, be practically the same as it would be if the order were issued in written form. In other words, the commander, in issuing a verbal order, should always state, first of all, the information of the enemy and of his own neighboring or supporting troops; he should next state his general plan of action or so much of it as is necessary to enable his subordinates to coöperate intelligently; next come the duties of the various fractions of the command; finally, the commander

must state where he himself can be found or where messages will reach him.

If a verbal order is issued by the commander of a newly formed detachment, it is advisable for him to state the *composition of his command* in the paragraph in which he states his "general plan of action." Similarly in the paragraph prescribing "the duties of the various fractions of the command" it is ordinarily very convenient in each sub-paragraph to designate the troops that are to perform the particular duties.

In issuing verbal field orders on the ground, and especially if no maps of the country are available, it is well if the commander can assemble his principal sub-commanders at some point from which a good view of the terrain can be obtained. Then, in issuing his orders, he can point out the various places mentioned therein.

The following (imaginary) verbal outpost order, which we will assume to have been issued by Major A to his company commanders and Lieutenant M of the cavalry, may serve to illustrate the remarks in the three preceding paragraphs:

"The enemy has withdrawn toward X, the town you can see there on that second hill about three miles north of here. Our main body has halted at Y, the village that lies in that grove of trees which you see about three-quarters of a mile south of here.

"I have been directed to establish outposts along Z creek, the stream here just to the north of us, with my battalion and a platoon of Troop A, 1st Cavalry.

"The cavalry platoon, under Lieutenant M, will reconnoiter toward . . . . . etc.

"Captain A, your company will form Support No. 1 and will . . . . . etc.

"Captain B, your company will form Support No. 2 and will . . . . . etc.

"Companies C and D will form the reserve and will . . . . . etc.

"Our battalion field train will . . etc.

"I shall be at . . . . . .

When verbal orders are being issued by the commander, each subordinate present should jot down such notes as will obviate the possibility of his forgetting any of the details that apply to his own particular command. Ordinarily also, a staff officer of the commander will at the same time take down sufficient notes to enable him to make a memorandum of the principal details of the order.

After having issued verbal field orders, it is usually advisable for the commander to state that in case any one does not understand his orders he should say so in order that the matter may be cleared up at once. Any officer who does not thoroughly understand his orders should of course have no hesitancy in asking that they be repeated or explained. If a false sense of pride keeps him from asking for such information or elucidation, he is not playing fair either to himself or to his commander.

In the outpost situation just assumed, Major A would doubtless, after issuing his orders, send back to the commander of the main body a short message stating his principal dispositions, and the place where messages will reach him.

COMPOSITION OF FIELD ORDERS

We shall now briefly consider what should appear in each paragraph of the body of an ordinary field order and what should be omitted.

1st Paragraph. (*Information of the Enemy and of our Supporting Troops.*)

In publishing information received concerning the enemy it is well, in most cases where the information is of doubtful reliability, to show the source of the information. The recipients of the order can then judge its value for themselves, and, in case the information proves incorrect, it will not reflect upon the commanders judgment. For instance, one might state "According to reports of friendly inhabitants" such and such is the case; or "A spy reports" such and such; or else the statement might be introduced by the words "It is reported" or "It is believed" that such and such is the case. When, however, the information is the result of a trained officer's personal observation or is otherwise known to be reliable and accurate, the commander should assume the responsibility of stating it as a fact. For example, instead of saying "A number of reports from reliable sources show that a hostile division camped near Kickapoo last night," the commander might better say "A hostile division camped near Kickapoo last night."

If the recipients of the order are already acquainted with the latest information concerning the enemy, the commander should begin his order by saying: "No further news of the enemy has been received" or something to that effect. Each officer who receives the order will then understand that the order is based on the assumption that the enemy's situation remains the same as before, and will be able to act more intelligently in case the enemy's actions prove to be considerably different from what was believed to be the case at the time the order was issued.

On the other hand, if trustworthy information of the enemy has been received since the subordinate officers were last made acquainted with the situation, this new information would ordinarily be stated. Similarly, with reference to our supporting troops,

any changes of *importance to our command* would ordinarily be mentioned.

Occasions often arise where for one reason or another it seems inadvisable to give out all that is known concerning the enemy or our supporting troops. A good example of such an occasion may be found in almost any retreat after an unsuccessful engagement. In such cases it is usually advisable to avoid distributing information of a discouraging nature unless it be absolutely necessary to do so in order to guard against surprise or further reverses. The troops, under such circumstances, are already disheartened, and a statement of all the conditions, even if given verbally and only to officers, may result unfavorably upon the already shaken morale of the command. All favorable information, however, such as reports of local successes on our side or the approach of reinforcements should be emphasized. Mis-statements must, however, be shunned, for otherwise both officers and men will lose confidence in their commander, and once he loses their confidence, his value as a leader ceases.

2d Paragraph. (*Plan of commander.*)

In this paragraph, the commander's plan must be outlined sufficiently to ensure the necessary coöperation of all parts of his command, the *extent* to which it is outlined depending upon the circumstances of the particular situation. In the case of a march made with a view to seizing some particular point several days' march distant, it would be very unwise to state the *object* of the movement before it is within reach. In such a case the second paragraph of the march order of each of the first few days would ordinarily merely state "This command will march today towards" such town or other geographical point, naming in each case some objective not more

than a good day's march distant. Thus not until the real objective is within reach would the real purpose of the movement become known to all—and yet each day the various subordinates would know all that was necessary for them to know on that particular day.

The importance of a commander giving out *enough of his plan to ensure team work* on the part of all elements of his command cannot be over-estimated. For example, in a defensive action it is important that the subordinate commanders be informed as to whether a "fight to a decision" is to be made or whether only a delaying action is to be fought, while in an attack it is equally necessary for the commander's general plan to be understood by all concerned.

3d Paragraph. (*Detailed Tactical Dispositions.*)

Much latitude must of necessity be permitted a commander in framing this part of his order. He must be sufficiently specific in regard to the respective duties of the various features of the command to ensure a thorough understanding of the relation that each part bears to the whole and to the other parts, and yet he must not rob his subordinates of their proper degree of initiative. Upon the wording of this paragraph (and the preceding one in which he outlines his general plan) largely depends the coöperation of the various sub-divisions. Imagine, for instance, a football team in which, at the crisis of the game, the signals given by the team captain were not clearly given, or were misunderstood by the other players. You can readily picture the effect upon the result of the game, even though the individual players were stronger and heavier than their opponents. Although Napoleon said that the Lord was on the side of the heaviest battalions, he did not

mean that mere numbers were the deciding factor, but rather that getting the heaviest battalions *to the right place at the right time* was what counted. Co-operation and team work count just as much in war as in football.

In composing the sub-paragraphs of this section of the order, a commander should utilize his knowledge of the character of his subordinate commanders. As Buddecke says: "The order must define exactly if the one who is to carry it out is of an over-adventurous nature; it may leave a larger discretion to a subordinate who may be expected to find the right way himself. The order speaks a very positive language when it is a question of urging on or of emphasizing responsibility; it needs only to hint if the exercise of proper initiative by the subordinate may be depended upon." Moreover, care must be taken to adapt the order to the intellectual horizon and military ability of the one who is to carry it out.

For instance, let us assume that *in time of war* and in the presence of the enemy Major A is detailed to form an outpost with his battalion. Let us further assume that two of his companies are to be placed on duty as supports, the other two being held in reserve, and that Companies A and B are the ones detailed for duty as supports. Company A is commanded by Captain A, an experienced officer of recognized ability, while Company B is temporarily commanded by 2d Lieutenant B, a young officer of little experience.

Assuming that Major A issues his orders to both support commanders at the same time, he would (after giving the preliminary information of the enemy, of supporting troops and of the fact that the battalion was detailed for outpost) simply say to Captain A something like this: "Captain, your company will form Support No. 1, taking position near that

hill and observing the front from this road (exclusive) to that farm house." While to Lieutenant B he might say: "Lieutenant B, your company will form Support No. 2 and will be posted on the southern edge of that orchard. You will be responsible for the front from this road (inclusive) to that stream. It will probably be necessary during daylight to have two sentry squads out in front, one at the bridge and the other at the railroad station. Send a patrol of a squad or so a half mile west of the bridge. Concerning your night positions I shall give you further instructions when I visit your support." (The other information necessary, i. e. the, location of the reserve and the place where he himself can be found, would then of course be given both officers).

The illustration just given shows how, at a time when a mistake on the part of a subordinate may prove costly, a commander must adapt his orders to the ability of the recipient. Captain A needed no detailed instructions concerning the manner in which he should perform his outpost duty, and Major A was perfectly right in not interfering with his prerogatives as a skillful commander. On the other hand, Major A was not sure that Lieutenant B would prove equal to the occasion—and so was equally right in going more into details in the orders to him.

On the other hand, had the above described situation arisen during a tactical exercise in time of peace, Major A would not have given Lieutenant B such detailed instructions, but would have made him depend more upon his own judgment. To quote from Gizycki: "During tactical exercises in time of peace the superior issues short orders and instructions and leaves the execution of the same as far as possible to his subordinates. For the superior then wishes to become acquainted with the ability and judgment of his subordinates. If errors are made by the latter

they do not result in injury to the troops, but serve as a means of instruction and further advancement. War is not the place for this. In war it is necessary to dispose of the available strength and ability in such a way as to derive the greatest benefit."

4th Paragraph. (*Orders for Sanitary Troops, Trains, etc.*)

This paragraph is sometimes unnecessary in very small commands, but in large commands the trains always demand a considerable part of the commander's attention. Especially is this the case with a strong force marching through hostile country and largely dependent upon its supply trains for its subsistence and upon its ammunition columns for the replenishment of its ammunition. In the handling of trains, as in the handling of troops, each situation must be judged upon its own merits and the disposition of the trains must be made to accord with the circumstances of the particular case.

5th Paragraph. (*Place of Commander.*)

Generally speaking, the body of a field order is incomplete unless it terminates with a statement as to where the commander can be found or where messages will reach him. (If, later on, the commander has reasons to go elsewhere, he should leave at the point designated in the order, a staff officer who knows his whereabouts.) Although the importance of this paragraph is self-evident, yet not infrequently, both at maneuvers and in war, information as to the "place of the commander" is inadvertently omitted—often with grave results.

WRITING OUT ORDERS CALLED FOR IN MAP PROBLEMS

In writing out orders called for as one of the requirements of a map problem, the following hints may be of assistance:

In deciding into how great detail you should go

in your orders, it is well to remember that all your (imaginary) subordinates are considered to be *well-trained officers.* By remembering this you will avoid giving detailed instructions on points which such subordinates *should be allowed to determine for* themselves. Do not usurp their rights as sub-commanders.

Confine your orders to the measures necessary to cover the particular situation presented in the problem. You will thus avoid the common fault of issuing orders that reach too far into the future.

In composing orders, whether written or verbal, it is generally advisable to follow the ordinary sequence of paragraphs prescribed for formal orders.

Whether written, dictated or verbal orders should be issued, will depend upon circumstances. Determine for yourself in what form you would actually issue the orders if the situation were real and you were actually in command of the troops on the ground. Then issue the orders in that form. Remember that in writing out verbal orders, the orders must be quoted *verbatim* and should be introduced by a statement showing the *time* and *place of issue* as well as *to whom issued.*

"There is no greater mistake, either in tactics or in the manner of drawing up orders, than a blind adherence to set forms. Every case is different. Every case must be judged and handled by itself."

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